

# Exploring Forgiveness and Repentance



## Materials Needed

Bible

## Preparation for the Leader

Families have opportunities to practice forgiveness every single day. This reflection focuses your family on forgiveness and repentance, on putting broken relationships back together. First, talk about what forgiveness and repentance means to family members. Then share stories from recent family experiences of needing forgiveness, and of needing to forgive. The Gospel provides many stories and teachings of Jesus on forgiveness. Choose one on which the family can reflect. End the reflection by sharing ways family members can help each other practice forgiveness.

## 1. Introduction to the Theme

Ask family members what the word forgiveness means. Share synonyms such as “absolving,” “mercifulness,” etc.

Share this definition: **forgiveness** is the act of letting go of anger or hurt caused by someone.

Ask family members what the word repentance means. Share synonyms such as “being remorseful, or contrite.”

Share this definition: **repentance** is the act of being truly sorry for one’s conduct.

## 2. Time for Storytelling

Family members can best understand the action of forgiveness and repentance by sharing stories of seeing these virtues in action. Use the following questions as a guide.

- + **For younger children:** What happens when you do something that is wrong, or when you do something that hurts someone else? (Help younger children tell a story about a time when they had to say “I am sorry.”)
- + **For older children and adults:** What have been some of the more difficult experiences you have had with forgiveness—either being in need of forgiveness or needing to forgive someone else? Tell about some of the people you know whose actions have modeled what it means to be a forgiving person. What are these people like? What do they do?

## 3. Stories from Our Faith Tradition

Choose one of the following Scripture passages and read it aloud to the family:

Matthew 18:21-35  
Luke 6:37-78  
Luke 15:11-31

Ask family members to summarize using several words or phrases that they feel is the central message of the Scripture which you read.

Ask how our relationship with each other and with God is different when we forgive and ask for forgiveness.

## 4. What Our Family Can Do

Family leader for this reflection shares points such as the following:

*Forgiveness and repentance are central messages in the Gospels. When someone breaks a bone and the doctor sets it and puts it in a cast, that bone will be even stronger after it heals that it was before the break--if the doctor sets it correctly. The same thing is true with our broken relationships. If "set" to heal properly, in the healing these relationships can end up even stronger than before. Such a miracle happens through the power of the Spirit of forgiveness in our lives, and through the true willingness on our part to reconcile with each other through Jesus. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the visible sign of that healing happening in our lives.*

Spend time in quiet prayer. Ask each family member to ask Jesus to be present in your family with a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

## 5. Family Examination of Conscience

- + When we have failed to listen to one another... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to speak honestly to one another... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to serve one another... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to support one another... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to pray and worship together... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to play and recreate together... Lord have mercy
- + When we have failed to serve the poor and need in our community... Lord have mercy

We pause now to pray for the gifts and blessings we need from God in order to be his loving presence with one another and the community in which we live.

*Invite prayers of petition for the gifts needed.*

We now pray together in union with families around the world the prayer Jesus himself gave us.

*Our Father...*

Let us now exchange a sign of peace.

